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FIVE W's OF

MEDIA COVERAGE

MEDIA RELATIONS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING CENTRES



Ontario

Secretariat for
Social Development

Ontario Youth Secretariat
Gordon Dean, Provincial Secretary

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THE FIVE Ws OF MEDIA COVERAGE

Why Media Follows

Where to Find It

What to Say

When to Contact

What to Do

How to Prepare

Press Tips

Additional Tips

The Five W's of Media Coverage;

Media Relations for Youth Employment Counselling Centres

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THE FIVE W's OF MEDIA COVERAGE

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WHY MEDIA COVERAGE?

Publicity is a necessity. Whether we like it or not media coverage makes an organization "legitimate". Think of the conversations you have that include something like this: "Oh yes, such and such is supposed to be good. I read about it in the paper."

Good publicity will also help in your private sector fund raising campaign. People will be more willing to give money to an organization they already know. Also, a good clipping is excellent material for a fund raising package.

Because up to 50% of your funding comes from the Secretariat for Social Development through the Ontario Youth Secretariat, it is always important to stress their support.

WHERE TO PUBLICIZE

A media campaign for an individual counselling centre should be selective. You do not want an uncontrollable influx of clients.

Find out if major corporations in your area publish in-house newsletters. Maybe your Chamber of Commerce publishes a magazine. This type of coverage will get you known in the business community. It will also help you fund raise and find jobs for your clients.

The major media have different characteristics. Consider the differences before choosing the medium to get your message across.

DAILY NEWSPAPERS:

Strong points:

complete story possible/specialized "beat" reporting
may print what you write provided it follows their press release format (obtainable from newspaper office)
photos can be used to highlight stories
clippings can be saved

Weak points:

rigid deadlines (contact them well in advance)

WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS:

Strong points:

same as dailies
copy is usually around for a week
specific focus is on local issues

Weak point:

lack of immediacy (but can provide good, detailed follow-up)

RADIO:

Strong points:

confidence inspired by human voice
on air interviews give you a chance to convey your ideas directly to your audience
interview programs provide "in depth" coverage

Weak points:

smaller staff, usually without "beats"
can't handle figures/statistics well
transitory coverage; can't be saved

TELEVISION

Strong points:

sound/picture/colour

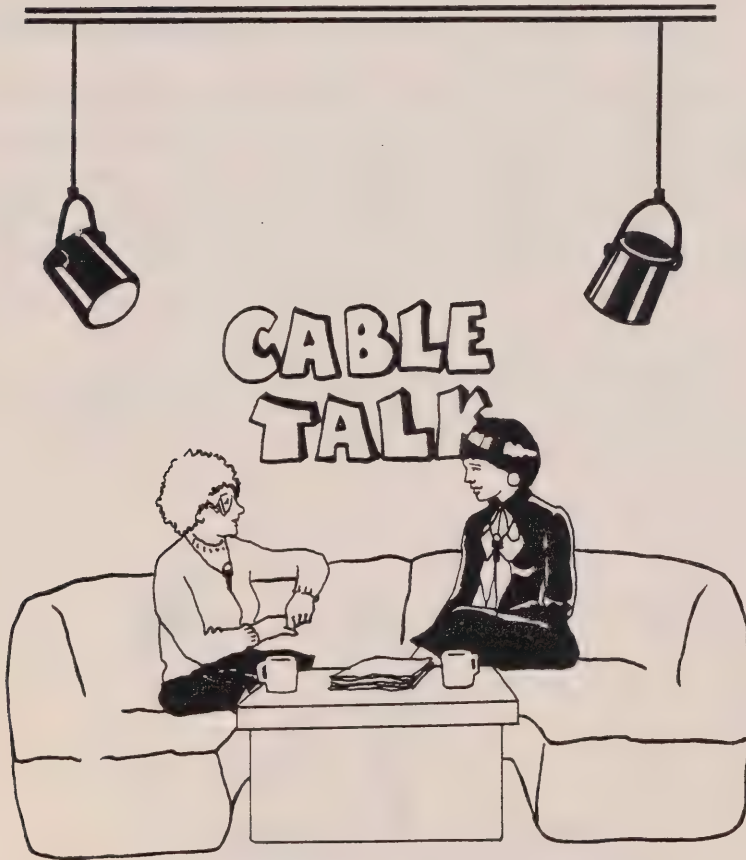
on air interviews give you a chance to convey your ideas directly to your audience

interview programs provide "in depth" coverage

Weak points:

transitory coverage; can't be saved as easily

newsclips are brief and superficial



WHO TO CONTACT

Don't wait for the media to contact you. Give them a call.

Establishing a contact on the newspaper is preferable. They will be invaluable in getting accurate and honest coverage.

If you don't have a contact, you will have to do a little research. Go to the library and look at either Bowden's Canadian Editorial Directory or Matthew's List. These media directories list the editorial staff of every newspaper, as well as every radio and television station in the country.

WHEN TO CONTACT:

Use common sense in contacting the media. Try to find out their deadlines or press time. Be sure that the time you are making contact is convenient for them. For example, don't call the editor of an afternoon paper early in the day. He or she will be too busy trying to meet the 10:00 a.m. deadline to give you proper attention. Phone in the afternoon after the rush has subsided.

When you have decided on an appropriate time of day, phone your contact early in the week. This is when stories are being scheduled.



WHAT TO SAY:

Before you call, write in point form why you think your Youth Employment Counselling Centre would make a good feature. Have this sheet in front of you when you speak to the editor.

Explain who you are and what you do. Be helpful and cooperative. The more organized you are the easier it will be to sell your story idea.

HOW TO PREPARE:

Journalism -- a profession whose business it is to explain to others what it personally does not understand.

Lord Northcliffe.

Prepare a fact sheet for the reporter's visit. Include any statistics that might come up in an interview, i.e. number of clients served, placement rates, funding information, correct names and titles of the people that the reporter will be meeting in the counselling centre. Prepare a points sheet for yourself. Make a list of all strong and weak points about your Youth Employment Counselling Centre. Whatever the reporter's first question is, respond in the following manner: "Well to answer your question let me explain the Youth Employment Counselling Program to you". Then make all the points you have written down.

It is important to bring up the weak points yourself. This will defuse any confrontational questions the reporter could ask you.

The reporter will want a human interest angle. Have successful clients available for the reporter to interview. You could even arrange for the reporter to talk to the clients' new boss.

If the clients want to remain anonymous be sure that the reporter understands this. The reporter will most likely cooperate by using false names.

Besides yourself and the clients, have at least one other counsellor and maybe a 'high profile' board member available to speak to the reporter. Brief them beforehand on what they might say.

Remember, you are trying to make the reporter's job easier.



RADIO TIPS:

The radio audience relies only on hearing. You can only appeal to this one sense.

PREPARATION:

- Ask the interviewer to provide you with a list of questions he/she will ask.
- Prepare a fact sheet for the interviewer and a point sheet for yourself (See HOW TO PREPARE).
- If you want to make a particular point, inform the interviewer before going on air.
- Listen to the show before your appearance.
- Practice answering key questions with a friend.
- Tape yourself — you'll become aware of verbal habits you want to avoid.

Prepare examples and anecdotes to tell your story. They are the best way to get your message across.

THE INTERVIEW:

- Have a cool drink before the show. A hot drink will not relax your throat.
- If your throat dries up when you are nervous, have some lemon drops ready to help you salivate.
- Avoid 'umming and aching'; you'll sound uncertain on the air.
- Do not respond to the questions with a 'yes' or 'no'. Use the questions as a springboard to tell your story.
- Don't pause excessively between sentences; the dead air sounds bad.
- Try to vary your voice tone.
- Laugh if possible. If you can't, then smile; your voice will reflect the enthusiasm you project.
- Keep your answers to the point; you don't want to preach your audience to sleep.

TELEVISION TIPS:

PREPARATION

- Prepare a fact sheet for the interviewer and a point sheet for yourself (see HOW TO PREPARE).

Prepare examples to tell your story. They are the best way to get your message across.

- Watch the show at least once before your appearance.
- If you are using visual aids, check ahead with the producer.
 - photos should have a matte finish
 - printed cards should be in large heavy type with minimum words per card
 - horizontal slides are best for television because of the screen's size

DRESS:

- Wear comfortable clothes of a muted color.
 - suits or outfits - grey or brown
 - shirts or blouses - pastel or offwhite
- Wear dark colored shoes; light colored shoes make your feet look big.

AVOID:

- stripes, checks, contrasting patterns
- large patterned scarves or ties
- sparkling cufflinks, tie clips, brooches or jewelry; they create distracting flares
- light colored accessories with light colored clothes
- pure white clothes: they make the face look dark on color television and produce a halo effect on black and white T.V.

THE INTERVIEW

- Be early.
- Enjoy your television experience. Try to handle it as a normal conversation.
- Keep eye contact with the interviewer. If you look at the monitor it looks as if you are staring into space.
- If your throat dries up when you are nervous, have some lemon drops ready to help you salivate.
- Have a cool drink before the show. A hot drink will not relax your throat.
- Ask the producer to go over hand signals. This will avoid being cut off in the middle of a long answer when there is not enough time.
- Do not respond to the questions with a 'yes' or 'no'. Use the questions as a springboard to tell your story.
- Speak in laymen's terms or you will lose the audience's attention.
- Don't be too polite and get roughed up or cut off in mid-sentence. Your real audience is the one you can't see. So don't waste a lot of time trying to convince the interviewer.
- Try to keep your head back. Leaning forward on TV makes you look furtive and nervous. This is important if you wear glasses because they will cast shadows on your face if you lean forward.
- Your interview will be relatively short, so concentrate on avoiding any personal habits that will come across as nervousness on the screen.

